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SPEAKING OUT

Two Schools of Thought

Within the ranks of the organized Theosophical Movement, there have existed for a number of years past two schools of thought vastly different from each other.

One of them is primarily based upon the writings of H. P. Blavatsky, the chief founder of the Theosophical Society, and the pronouncements of her own superiors in the occult hierarchy. To these may be added a considerable number of essays and articles written by some of the direct pupils of the Teachers, and frequently under their own direction.

The other school is based upon claimed psychic investigations and clairvoyant revelations of several individuals whose claims have remained unsupported and unchecked by any collateral authority, and have been accepted on their own say-so, without any subsidiary corroboration.

The teachings of these two schools of thought diverge from, and very often contradict, each other on various important points. In the very nature of things they cannot be harmonized.

Personal attachments of students to one or another 'authority', genuine or claimed, is of course no guarantee, and therefore cannot decide either the nature or the implications of one or the other approach to the subject of occultism. Something more is required than emotional reactions or the tendency to overlook essentials and disregard fundamental differences.

It is quite probable that in a Movement like ours, no matter in what historical era it may manifest itself, there will arise from time to time individuals whose psychic tendencies will be the basis for various claims of special knowledge, and groups of followers will always be found to give them the emotional support which they desire—a support devoid of any intellectual basis or independent analysis of the claims made. This seems to be the fate of all occult and pseudo-occult movements whose history has come down to us, however imperfectly.

It is a curious commentary upon human confusion in general, and the psycho-mental uncertainty of some students of Theosophy, that Publishing Houses within the organized Theosophical Movement sell indiscriminately various works belonging to the two diametrically opposite schools of thought mentioned above, and often advertise them on the same page of their publications. Considering this fact, the accusation made by some hostile critics that the organized Movement is not vitally interested in spreading truth (as it understands it), but in merely selling books on the general subject of occultism, is not without foundation, and should be sympathetically considered and analyzed.

There is, however, a very important fact which must not

be overlooked by students. It is concerned with science and scientific discoveries and developments of recent years.

It so happens that scores of the most up-to-date scientific pronouncements concerning the nature and structure of the universe support and uphold many of the statements contained in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and her own Teachers, while the same pronouncements go contrary to, and disavow the claims of psychic investigators and the results of their research. This fact is of primary importance and should be given most careful consideration by students of Theosophy.

Recent developments in the field of astronomy, chemistry, physics, anthropology, biology and, above all, in the newly-developed area of parapsychology, present a long list of discoveries, as well as theories, which were foreshadowed in *The Secret Doctrine* and other contemporary writings from high occult sources. The scientific achievements and conclusions have thrown further doubt, however, on a number of psychic speculations the nature of which had been suspect for some years past.

There is a serious warning contained in this fact of observation.

It would be regrettable if the reader were to jump to the totally unwarranted conclusion that no reliance whatever should be given to the pronouncements of psychics and clairvoyants, on the ground that they are, allegedly, always wrong. This is not true.

Psychic vision can be objective and reliable, but only in the case of those extremely rare individuals who have received severe and sustained occult training, maybe for more than one lifetime, under the guidance of a competent Teacher, himself a genuine Initiate. Many are those who have psychic vision, or psychic sensitivity of one type or another; many are those who are to some extent clairvoyant or clairaudient. But the overwhelming majority of them *do not know what they see or hear* and, jumping to conclusions, ascribe what they perceive to totally wrong causes, and interpret them in accordance with one or another theory or pet illusion which gives a special bent to their mind and their emotions. Hence the unreliability of otherwise kindly and friendly folk claiming to be the custodians of higher knowledge.

The only way in which truth can be sifted from a lot of psychic rubbish, as far as students of Theosophy are concerned, is by a calm analysis of the teachings of the two schools referred to above. Compare their pronouncements on the basic occult subjects. Consider their implications. Do not jump to conclusions on the basis of an inadequate research. Find out whether the propositions under consideration are logical, reasonable and universal; whether they fit together into a harmonious whole; whether they follow one from the other and support one another. If they do not, reserve your judgment and remain alert. A more prolonged

study may be required before you can arrive at a conclusion that will satisfy you in every way.

On the eve of the centenary of the modern Theosophical Movement, we are called upon to purify the Theosophical atmosphere of unfortunate delusions and to abide as closely as possible by the original teachings as a sacred trust in our care.

—Boris de Zirkoff, *Theosophia*, Summer 1971

FROM THE FORECOURT TO THE HEART OF THE TEMPLE

The following article, which explains the purposes of "The School for the Study and Promulgation of the Esoteric Philosophy", is translated from the Theosophical magazine *Manas*, published at The Hague, Holland. It is offered here as a pertinent though indirect response to the questions raised by Mrs. Erica Lauber in our last Newsletter with the suggestion that it could well be read and pondered on in connection with the points therein raised. It is clear that the School, which has a branch in Arnhem but whose headquarters is at The Hague, places little emphasis on organization but much on study, an understanding of the Theosophical philosophy, and a living of the life.

Other groups around the world are following the same general procedure, and all support the Blavatsky tradition of teaching and are largely unencumbered by the bounds and shackles of organization. For twenty years, for instance, the Corresponding Fellows Lodge in England has followed this course. With very few administrative problems, the work of instruction, encouragement and inspiration has been carried on through the vital pages of their monthly magazine, edited by Mrs. Harry Benjamin.

We look forward to hear from other Lodges, Groups or Societies with the hope of sharing their comments with our readers. In the meantime those interested in the methods and successes (as well as difficulties) experienced by Mrs. Benjamin and Mr. J. H. Venema are invited to address them directly (24 Upper Brighton Road, Worthing, Sussex, England; Van Blankenburgstraat 66-A, The Hague, Holland.)—Eds.

The real spiritual movements throughout the ages have often rightly been compared in a mystical sense to a temple—a temple with a forecourt and many halls of instruction. Through these halls the neophyte may reach the center, sometimes called "the heart of the Universe".

The comparison has not always been properly understood. The "halls of instruction"—again in a mystical sense—are the stages on the path the student must follow. (See *The Voice of the Silence*.) Also, the word "esoteric" today is being used in season and out of season by spiritually-minded groups—often rightly used in the sense of "more within" (Greek—*esotero*), and thus hidden, confidential or "intended for the initiate(s)". We know, however, that there is a much deeper and originally more exact meaning of the word, namely the secret instruction given to those "who follow a path" or lead a life in the service of humanity and of all that lives, and who therefore have taken an inviolable pledge—this, to protect themselves and others.

We, however, who are studying the age-old philosophy of life should not lose sight of the true meaning that lies hidden beneath the superficial use of certain words. It is this misconception of such words which has caused a vagueness of philosophical understanding through the centuries and is largely responsible for essential spiritual loss in the theosophical movements. The forecourts were mistaken for the

inner halls; symbols for truth itself; the byways or psychic phenomena for the *real* esoteric path. It is the ever-recurrent tragedy of the human pilgrim in his search for Truth and Light.

The lesser mysteries, with their symbols, rites and allegorical representations may so easily be mistaken for the real mysteries, the *symbolical* initiations for the real thing, that is, for that inner path which is said to lead ever more inwards, to the heart of the Universe, to the losing of self to find the SELF. The Way leads from "the forecourt to the center".

Let us try to understand terms and words well. Let us test ourselves as to whether we sincerely seek the esoteric path and the halls of learning by asking ourselves such questions as:

When passing through trials, for instance in the case of false accusations, do we control sufficiently our wounded personality and continue our work unperturbed?

Are our motives in desiring to receive more instruction purely for the sake of laying our knowledge on the altar of humanity? Are we at all times trustworthy and steadfast in our love for our fellowmen, with compassion for all that lives and the wish to alleviate the suffering of our fellow-pilgrims (also our "younger brothers" the animals)?

Can we, as Carlyle said: "labor and never despair" and thus endeavor to preserve the *balance of forces* in this world?

Shall our watchword be: "Only sickness or death will stop me from carrying out my task"?

Are we prepared to pledge ourselves, as the great ones before us did, to give ourselves without ever forgetting our duty towards all, and bear in mind the words of Gottfried de Purucker: "There is no freedom so great, no happiness so large, so wide-reaching as the giving of the self in service"? (See page 54, *Wind of the Spirit*)

These are only a few of the questions which the neophyte on the path has to answer. Let us note the difference between working in the forecourts and the progression to the inner halls, and test ourselves. Theosophy in its fundamentals is for everyone without preference or exception—the teachings of Rebirth, Karma-Nemesis and Evolution—because they are *laws of life*; but the deeper *living* and *experiencing* of them is for the individual. "How far will you go?" the guru asks in the asram, the sacred abode of the ascetics and sages.

Let us on the basis of these reflections never think that Theosophy *itself* could have "failed". People, groups and societies will make mistakes and "fail" *because* they often run into sidepaths. The ambition-seeking temporal self causes the divisions, the digressions, the sectarianism. Difficulties come and have come through personal views as to *how* certain work of organization should be carried out, *never through the ancient wisdom-religion itself*, the essential thing. The fundamentals of Theosophia, being based on the processes of the universe can no more "fail" than the sun or the rotations of the stellar systems.

We know that after 1875 the theosophical conceptions slowly but surely have penetrated into science, philosophy and religion, whether this has been admitted or not. Thus the true spiritual movement progresses independently of all groups and forms.

Therefore, as soon as Theosophy *itself* is the subject for study, it at once leads to the conviction that it is love and compassion which is needed above all. There may be a healthy difference of opinion as to conclusions with regard to deeper teachings, on account of our limitations of understanding and our individual "ring-pass-not", but the basis of brotherhood and tolerance is unassailable.

Let us therefore stand firm by H.P.B.'s charge to support the fundamentals of the Secret Doctrine, which are as true today as ever, and give the right interpretation of the word "esoteric". Here lies the real joy of life, the power to learn to know the "gift of the gods". Our work is propelled by the hierarchies of Light. The whole universe is behind it.

—J. H. Venema

UNIVERSALITY AND THE ESOTERIC TRADITION

By G. de Purucker

H.P.B. wrote grandly of the Secret Doctrine of the ages, and she pointed out that this Secret Doctrine has come down to us from time immemorial in the guardianship of our great Teachers, in all their various grades. She showed that this Wisdom of the Gods was originally handed to the first human protoplasts by beings from other spheres, by spiritual beings from other planes, to use the argot which we have popularized. But it seemed to me that with all the grandeur of her teaching and the high plane of thought to which she led us, there still remained something to be given which should guard the student against the intrusion into his mind of false ideas, false teachings, doctrines leading him away from the Central Fire. In other words men lacked, Theosophists lacked, a standard, a teststone, against which they could lay a teaching presented to them and find out whether the teaching were pure gold or only tinsel, brass.

What is this really infallible touchstone, this instrument which you can use if you recognize it? It is universality. Any teaching presented to you which cannot stand that test, which can be shown to be only a purported communication from other spheres, and which has no basis in the great philosophies and religions and sciences of the past given to mankind by Masters of Wisdom—any such teaching is fraudulent and has no right, no place, in court, in the court of our conscience. The gods taught men in the beginning, man in his childhood, and led him on, and bred him up, enlightened his mind, so that it could receive and understand and pass on in secret and open tradition the archaic God-Wisdom, our god-teachings, the Secret Doctrine.

In getting this idea, this conception that truth, reality, has been communicated to mankind, that it is now on earth ready for us when we prove ourselves ready for it and worthy of it, we understand that it is traditional, that it has been given forth in larger or smaller measure and in varying manners from age to age by the greatest men, the titan intellects, of the human race; and therefore that this tradition, this Qabbâlâh, this Brahma-Vidyâ, can be found in all the great religions and philosophies of the ages.

In accepting this view, you lose sight of the mere author of whatever book may be in your hands. You forget the personality, the individuality of the Teacher, and you look to what he brings. *If he is genuine* you find, not the vague frontiers upon which structures of falsity may be erected by scheming minds; but you understand that here is a glorious and mighty Tradition coming down to us from the Universe, from the heart of Divinity, and that its appearances as communicated to men are in the great religions and philosophies of the ages.

It is this Tradition, this Secret Doctrine, which gave to H.P.B. the title of her masterpiece; and it was for this same reason that I chose these actual words, *The Esoteric Tradition*, as the title of my latest book. It is esoteric because few have as yet understood it. It is traditional because it has been handed down from immemorial time. Thus *The Esoteric Tradition* is an attempt, feeble it may be, but very honest and sincere, to do what our Teachers are trying to do with us: to instil into our hearts and minds a reverence for and a worship of the truth before us; to awaken in our hearts the divine Fire of love for all that is, which becomes constricted and restricted and usually degraded when it is fastened solely on an individual accepted as a Teacher.

The suggestion in the title of this book is that a Teacher should receive reverence, but only in so far as his teaching is truth. In losing sight of the man, you see the Message. Was there not need, is there not need, of just this touchstone, particularly in the Theosophical Movement today? Is it not absolutely accordant with all that dear H.P.B. taught us: to look within, to look up, to forget yet to revere the hand which gives; to take the Message? Inspect it. Take from it what you find good; reject the balance if you wish. You may make a mistake in so doing, but you are exercising your prerogative of choice, of discrimination, of intuition. And by so exercising it you give strength; and as time passes it will grow very powerful, and you will then take back the corner-stone which you rejected, and in so doing you will receive the Teacher with the teaching in your hearts, and in the proper way.

One lesson I have learned: that it is the teaching and its magic working upon me which counts; for when the teaching enters my heart my reverence for the communicator grows. Is not your reverence for our Masters infinitely greater when you realize that they awaken in us the noblest and best? It is just this noblest and best in us which, when awakened, enables us to see them. And that is what they want: not to have us see them, but to have us awake, our hearts beating in steady rhythm with the heartbeat of the universal heart, and our minds fired with the truth which they communicate to us and which we value precisely in proportion as it is impersonal.

I think the Theosophical Movement will suffer from no more fakers, no more false teachers, now or in the future, provided we can remember that the touchstone of anything that may be offered to us for a teaching is universality, and the appeal to the conscience, the appeal to the voice within.

—G. de Purucker, *Wind of the Spirit*,

(Extemporaneous remarks given in the Temple of Peace, Point Loma, California, in 1941.)

Lending Library — Point Loma Publications has now started a lending library available at present to readers in the San Diego vicinity, who can apply to the Library for a list of available books. Later it is hoped to extend these facilities to a wider reading public.

Available also immediately are recordings (cassettes or reels) of Theosophical talks of an informal nature mostly, which may be borrowed or purchased. We now have on hand the following: No. 1: H.P.B. and White Lotus Day—Boris de Zirkoff; No. 2: The Right Pronunciation of Sanskrit Terms used in Theosophical Literature: Geoffrey A. Barborka; No. 3: The Dead Sea Scrolls: Elsie Benjamin; No. 4: H.P.B. the Messenger of the Mahatmas: Christmas Humphreys; No. 5: Is Discipleship Possible in the West? L. Gordon Plummer; No. 6: The Real Meaning of Christmas: L. Gordon Plummer and W. Emmett Small; No. 7: Reincarnation, Karma, and the Nuclear Age: W. Emmett Small. Price for cassette or reel: to purchaser, \$4.00; to borrower: \$2.00.

REINCARNATION IN THE NETHERLANDS PRESS

Friends in The Hague, Holland, have sent us a page from *De Telegraaf* of May 1, 1971, which has about one million readers. Across the top of the page in inch-high letters is the word REINCARNATION. Below it is a picture intended to describe a vision of a previous life. The article, filling the entire page, is by Dr. H. van Praag. In the left-hand top is a paragraph, which in rough translation reads:

"In the course of last year the question about life after death was discussed more and more, and also if with death everything is ended. It can safely be said that death is in the center of interest from many points of view. Questions about reincarnation, spiritism, talks with dying persons, resurrections, heaven and hell, eternal life, etc., are the current subject of millions of people on television programs."

COMMENT ON PUBLICATIONS FROM LETTERS RECEIVED:

Molly Griffiths, Victoria, B.C., Canada.—I am thrilled about the republication of *Wind of the Spirit* and enclose \$100 towards expenses.

T. G. Davy, Gen. Sec. The Theosophical Society in Canada.—All in all Point Loma Publications, Inc. seems to have got off to an auspicious start and has quickly accelerated. We were pleased to hear the news of the plans by Theosophical University Press to publish the *Glossary*.

S. Hildor Barton, Porterville, Calif.—One is strongly impressed with the thought that to defend H.P.B. is the right thing and conforming to her own nature—to uphold her true and vitalizing place and works in the vast shimmering arena of modern development, in the midst of which she was the original *Ecologist*, and her 'Nosegay' the Magic Herb first applied. Rather this, than the adulation and canonizing of her personally as a silken saint belonging exclusively to 'our little group'.

Lucia Bacardi Grau, Monte Carlo, Monaco.—Mme Blavatsky *Defended* is a wonderful book in its own right. The author's views and those of Emmett Small, Gordon Plummer, Boris de Zirkoff, Enrique Columbié, and others, are so *gentlemanly* expressed that I feel in them the breeding of the basic principles of the Knights of King Arthur, which in this world are 'fane'—out of circulation. I also love and admire the way in which Jalie Shore attacks the subject. It is most effective. The book expresses every means for the comeback of an H.P.B. untainted, and on the road to the true image of a wonderful woman. In books that I have read recently on Cosmology, the stars, etc., she is quoted as a reliable source of knowledge. Remember that *big men* are not tolerated by *little men*. She could not escape from them. That is the reason of all these attacks. She was a genius.

Staffan Kronberg, Stockholm, Sweden.—This vindication of H.P.B.—I quite see how imperative it was for you to write and compile

it, and I hope that the book will have a wide circulation among people of intelligence. The general reader of magazines is of no consequence; the amount of trash that gets printed and read makes it impossible for him to retain anything but the dimmest of ideas of what last week's issue contained, nor does he care as long as the current journal has some new 'seven days' wonder' to expatiate on. I have a fairly wide circle of acquaintances, journalists some of them, who read *TIME*; None of them remembers any article concerning the point at issue, which goes to prove my thesis. But, as I said, *your refutation was needed*; it is ample and a document to refer to if this series of imputations should occur again.

Russell Durning, Northern Illinois University, De Kalb, Ill.—I have read the three issues of *The Eclectic Theosophist* and thoroughly enjoyed them. I think it can be a medium of information and a forum for all genuine theosophists no matter what mundane schools or groups they may belong to.

Michael Schweitzer, Seattle, Wash.—I have found *Madame Blavatsky Defended* to be a really great book. I have been studying Theosophy only about a year and a half now but this book seems to give the best introduction to Theosophy, what it stands for, the people who started it, H.P.B. and those in connection with her, a glimpse of the problems facing this great Movement, and an insight into the character of the people who are today studying Theosophy and making such a tremendous effort for its preservation.

Deaths of Note. — Under this heading, the following notice comes to our attention, just as we go to press. It is reprinted from the *San Diego Evening Tribune*, July 20, 1971.

"Corona del Mar. James A. Long, 72, leader of the Pasadena-based Theosophical Society for the past twenty years, died yesterday of a heart attack. After he became head of the philosophy group he founded the magazine *Sunrise*; he also was author of the book *Expanding Horizons*."

H. P. Blavatsky and *The Secret Doctrine: Commentaries on Her Contributions to World Thought*, Edited by Virginia Hanson. A Quest Book published under a grant from the Kern Foundation by The Theosophical Publishing House, P.O. Box 270, Wheaton, Illinois 60187, Price: \$2.25. As we go to press, this book has just been received at our office. We hope to review it in our next issue.

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Point Loma Publications:

Wind of the Spirit, by G. de Purucker
Paperback, 282 pp. \$3.25. To Dealers—\$2.25

H. P. Blavatsky Defended, by Iverson L. Harris
Paperback, 174 pp. \$3.00. To Dealers—\$2.00

Theosophy Under Fire, by Iverson L. Harris
Paperback, 88 pp. \$3.00. To Dealers—\$2.00